

**Joint Press Availability**  
**William Lynn, III, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense**  
**Alexandr Vondra, Czech Minister of Defense**  
**June 15, 2011**  
**Prague, Czech Republic**

Transcript text:

**Czech Minister of Defense Alexandr Vondra:** [Speaking Czech] Good morning. I am glad William Lynn, number two in the Pentagon, a very important person, visited Prague, because we know the transition there is going on. When we said good-bye to Robert Gates in Brussels last week we already were looking forward to cooperating with Leon Paneta. When we evaluated Czech-U.S. defense relations during the meeting, I think we now have an opportunity to sufficiently enter a new phase of cooperation and we consider this discussion very useful and good. We really negotiated on all fronts. This week, my first deputy, Jiri Sedivy, is in the U.S. together with Secretary Jan Vylita and they are also negotiating there. I, of course, presented to Mr. Lynn the main conclusions of the White Book. The issues we talked about were cooperation and the MD future, cooperation in the area of air defense and in the area of pilot training and specifically helicopter programs. It's one of the fields where the CR is involved. Of course, we talked about the START treaty and other issues. Regarding missile defense, we welcome the new developments. We agreed in Lisbon that MD will be created under NATO, which, in fact, shifts the situation in the direction which we have always requested. We really appreciate the U.S. involvement in the form of the Phased Adaptive Approach as a U.S. contribution to a complex European missile defense. In this context we, of course, thanked them for the previous, pre-Lisbon U.S. offer and we stated that in the light of Lisbon and further developments the previous offer of our participation in the Shared Early Warning System will no longer be necessary and that we would seek other possibilities of the Czech Republic's future involvement in the Allied System. I would say that was one of the outcomes. As for the other outcome – we will intensively discuss matters of long-term partnership in the field of helicopters, helicopter pilot training, and in other fields that relate to transport helicopter [inaudible], as these are the capacities we can deploy here at home, based on the White Book. This is one of the fields we want to develop. Naturally, cooperation will be pursued even in the traditional Czech specific fields – protection against WMD in the Special Forces sphere, which will be deployed this year in Afghanistan. I would also like to stress R&D cooperation. We are grateful for the opening of the Office of Naval Research.

**Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn:** Minister Vondra, it's great to be here in Prague. The Minister and I have just had a very important and useful meeting. I want to thank him personally for the opportunity to talk face-to-face about how we are addressing global security challenges together and how we can expand this cooperation into the future. One of the most important areas we

discussed was current operations in Afghanistan and the progress being made towards the transition to Afghan responsibility for security by the end of 2014.

We recognize and appreciate the increased Czech contribution raising the force total in Afghanistan to over 700 hundred this year. The additional Czech trainers and mentors will prove the capability of Afghan security forces and the Afghan military as we prepare for this critical transition. The Czech contribution here is vital. I conveyed my gratitude to the Czech Armed Forces for their contributions to the ISAF mission as well as for their missions in Kosovo and Iraq. The professionalism of Czech troops and civilian specialists in Afghanistan is highly valued by the allied command and staff, including General Patraeus. For we know this mission has come with costs and I express our condolences on behalf of the American people for the recent loss of a Czech soldier. As someone who has met with many families of fallen warriors in my own country, I can tell you that there is no more sobering reminder of the cost of establishing peace and security.

Minister Vondra also shared with me the Czech government's efforts through the White Book on defense to improve and reform the military and the defense procurement system. We applaud these efforts, because they make a good and capable ally an even better and stronger one. We all face difficult choices as we seek to spend our scarce resources wisely. A transparent and efficient procurement process ensures that the taxpayers' money is properly spent, that service members are well equipped and that we as NATO allies are making the necessary contributions for our collective security and defense.

These improvements will lead to even more opportunities for defense cooperation. I am gratified that the United States has been able to provide significant assistance to the Czech Armed Forces in terms of training, communication, modernization and air crew equipment. These opportunities to train together and to fight our adversaries using common tools are among the many mutual benefits of our strategic relationship. One particular area where this cooperation is yielding important results is helicopter operations and training, as Minister Vondra noted. Not only is the Czech Republic preparing Afghan pilots as part of our NATO mission, we're also working together on several current and future projects that will expand both U.S. and Czech capabilities to support a range of potential missions.

And our long-standing National Guard State Partnership Program will also continue. In this program the citizen soldiers and airmen of the Texas and Nebraska National Guards have worked with the Czech Armed Forces in the areas of disaster relief and mass-casualty operations. So, as you can see our strategic defense relationship is a broad one. Minister Vondra and I are both committed to continuing and expanding our partnership. Together, I'm confident we can meet the critical security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Jiri Roskot, Pravo Daily:** What were the reasons for finishing participation or the cancellation of the offer to host the Early Warning System in the Czech Republic? What are the opportunities of the CR to join the system, to participate and what are the ways forward to deal with the Russians on missile defense?

**Deputy Secretary Lynn:** Minister Vondra and I have emphasized that there are multiple strands to the Czech-US strategic relationship. There are extensive contacts between our military, those contacts are growing, as the minister mentioned. We have a relationship in research and development area through the Office of Naval Research; we have strong relationships in terms of special operations forces, in terms of peacekeeping, the minister mentioned the Czech capabilities in CBRN, the opportunity to build on those, to get greater capability for both countries. I think one of the particular points in this meeting that we think we can build on is cooperation in terms of helicopter training operations and maintenance, there is currently a Czech team in the United States that is bringing some new ideas on that. We are looking forward evaluating those, and looking at that as a basis for further cooperation. In terms of the Shared Early Warning there is no offer that was cancelled, I think that the offer that we made, as the minister described, was overtaken by events. The Lisbon Summit has, I think, changed the nature of the missile defense framework in which we are operating and that the offer, while it was an interesting one and a good one, no longer fits either the missile defense framework or the Czech needs.

**Minister Vondra [Speaking Czech]:** I wouldn't say that the offer has been cancelled, because the offer was made in a certain historical context. After the U.S. changed the original MD concept where the Czech Republic had its share, there came this well-meant offer. We evaluated it and presented our opinion several times. But in the meantime, there has been some development. There came the Lisbon summit decision and there has been further progress on the NATO joint system – I mean we got to a certain stage where it was superseded and where we have a whole spectrum of other fields where we can work hard to find a kind of cooperation between the U.S. and CR which will make practical sense.

**Jiri Roskot, Pravo Daily:** [inaudible]

**Deputy Secretary Lynn:** We think that a relationship with Russia helps build security for all Europe and we've been exploring multiple avenues to strengthen that relationship. And missile defense is one of them. It came out of the recent meetings. Cooperation to meet threats that Iran might pose, is another area. We think that to the extent that we build the bridges to Russia the security for all of Europe is improved.

**AFPS:** Are there any new initiatives that were discussed today that there could be further cooperation and collaboration between the United States and the Czech Republic?

**Deputy Secretary Lynn:** As I mentioned in the answer to the previous question, I think there are multiple areas that we have. Individually, these areas are very strong. Collectively, I think they build an unbreakable bond between the U.S and the Czech Republic. I think probably to answer your specific question; the area that's most current in terms of exploration is the helicopter training, maintenance and operations. And that area we greatly admire the Czech expertise which is being very vividly demonstrated in Afghanistan. And we think that the ideas that are in the White Book that are focusing on core competencies in these difficult fiscal times, that is exactly the right approach and clearly helicopter operations, training and maintenance is a core competency of the Czech Republic. So, as I mentioned, I think the next step is what's going on in the United States now, where there is a Czech team there discussing with their American partners how to take the next steps in this important area.

**Minister Vondra:** [speaking Czech] I would simply give three areas – first, helicopters and everything connected to it; second, defense against mass destruction weapons which is a traditional area; and third – science and research; and the possible fourth – air defense.

**Tománek, ČTK (Czech News Agency):** [speaking Czech] You talked [inaudible] about other areas of bilateral relations.

**Deputy Secretary Lynn:** The White Book on defense, which the minister shared with me during the meeting we had, I think it forms the foundation for the Czech defense enterprise moving forward. Focusing on core competencies in difficult fiscal times is critical. It's very important to have a strategy to spend scarce resources wisely and I think the White Book has laid that out very clearly. It is committed to core competencies; it's committed to transparency in the procurement arena, so it has developed a defense establishment with which the U.S. can build a strong partnership as we go into facing the same challenges for the same reasons. We have fiscal challenges of our own. We focusing on our own core competencies and having a mutual understanding of what those competencies are is the strong foundation for a strong relationship going forward.

**Minister Vondra:** [speaking Czech] We have certain resources which are available and they don't allow us do more. So we have to be selective, be able to choose between what's really important and necessary and here we of course prefer the resources which are deployable and capable of

interoperability with our allies in a short-time horizon. That's what the White Book is about. Second, after all, there is an effort to make things transparent and rational. [inaudible]. Something that the Americans criticized before [inaudible].

**Press Availability Ends.**